

Stewardship: Living Christianity [Radically]

A publication for Chicago Catholics
Archdiocese of Chicago- Department of Stewardship and Development

Stewardship Misconceptions

Stewardship in the context of the Catholic Church is often a difficult subject because there are so many differing faces of stewardship, and we each have our own idea of what stewardship means in our personal lives. We also have many misconceptions about stewardship. However, it may help to understand what stewardship is not.

STEWARDSHIP IS NOT A “PROGRAM.” Rather, it is a biblically-based concept by which we are each called to live our lives as disciples of Christ. It should be an ongoing and integral part of our lives as Catholics.

STEWARDSHIP IS NOT ABOUT RAISING MONEY. Financial return is often a by-product of stewardship, since our treasure is one of the three ways in which we are asked to return our gifts to God. However, living a life of stewardship encourages a person to share of her/himself (time and talent) in a parish or community ministries. Oftentimes, we share our treasure with people and organizations with whom we share our time.

STEWARDSHIP IS NOT NEW. Many think that stewardship is new to our Church. In a limited sense, this may be true. Protestant churches in America, for example, have a much longer history of stewardship than the American Catholic Church. This is changing rapidly, however. In the broader context, stewardship is solidly grounded in the Bible. It is certainly not a new concept.

STEWARDSHIP IS NOT A CALL FOR PARISHES TO DO ANYTHING THEY SHOULD NOT ALREADY BE DOING.

Almost every aspect of what parish life entails can be linked back to the biblical call for us to become better stewards. Stewardship should permeate each of our lives, as well as our parish community life, since as stewards, we are called to live our lives as disciples of Christ. So in a real sense, parishes should be “doing” stewardship continuously as a part of the fabric of daily parish life.



In 1992, the U.S. Bishops Pastoral Letter *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response* was published. This pastoral accelerated what was already a rapidly growing stewardship movement among American Catholics. Some thought it was strange that this pastoral letter said nothing about money. Instead, the Bishops asked us primarily to live our lives as disciples of Christ, and in so doing to:

Be **STEWARDS OF OUR CREATION**, the world in which we live.

Be **STEWARDS OF OUR VOCATIONS**, that is, to make the best use of our God-given talents.

Be **STEWARDS OF THE CHURCH**. This implies the giving of our time, talent and treasure to our parish.

For more information about stewardship of creation, vocation and the church, and living intentionally as a Christian steward, please contact Anne Marie Tirpak at 312/655-7713, atirpak@archchicago.org, or visit http://www.archchicago.org/departments/stewardship_dev/stewardship.shtm.

Who is a Christian steward?

One who receives God's gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible manner, shares them in justice and love with others, and returns them with increase to God.

Stewardship:

A Disciple's Response

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Earth Day is celebrated Thursday, April 22, 2004. How will you celebrate?

*Ecological
stewardship means
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Stewardship and Earth Day

The Bishops invite us to be Stewards of Creation, Stewards of Vocation and Stewards of the Church, as outlined in their pastoral letter *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. Our country celebrates Earth Day on Thursday, April 22. Here is what our bishops have to say about stewardship of our earth.

“Stewardship of the world is expressed by jubilant appreciation of nature, whose God-given beauty not even exploitation and abuse have destroyed. Beyond simply appreciating natural beauty, there is the active stewardship of ecological concern. Ecological stewardship means cultivating a heightened sense of human interdependence and solidarity. It therefore calls for renewed efforts to address what Pope John Paul II calls ‘the

structural forms of poverty’ existing in this country and on the international level (Message for the World Day of Peace, January 1, 1990). And it underlines the need to reduce military spending and do away with war and weapons of war.

Especially this form of stewardship requires that many people adopt simpler lifestyles. This is true not only of affluent persons and societies, but also those who may not be affluent as that term is commonly understood yet do enjoy access to superfluous material goods and comforts.”

Don't Be a Drip...Some Facts for Ecological Awareness

- ☼ Here is an example of the water we use every day:
3-7 gallons for toilet,
25-30 gallons for tub,
50-70 gallons for a 10 minute shower,
1 washing machine load uses 25-40 gallon.
- ☼ Every ton of paper that is recycled saves 17 trees.
- ☼ One gallon of motor oil can contaminate up to 2 million gallons of water. Dispose properly!
- ☼ We each use about 12,000 gallons of water every year.
- ☼ 1/3 of all water is used to flush the toilet.
- ☼ The energy we save when we recycle one glass bottle is enough to light a light bulb for four hours.
- ☼ Each person throws away approximately four pounds of garbage every day.
- ☼ One bus carries as many people as 40 cars!
- ☼ More than 1/3 of all energy is used by people at home.
- ☼ Most families throw away about 88 pounds of plastic every year.
- ☼ The 500 million automobiles on earth burn an average of 2 gallons of fuel a day.
- ☼ Each gallon of fuel releases 20 pounds of carbon dioxide into the air.
- ☼ Approximately 5 million tons of oil produced in the world each year ends up in the ocean.
- ☼ The amount of wood and paper we throw away is enough to heat 50 million homes for 20 years .
- ☼ Earth is 2/3 water. but all the fresh water streams only represent one hundredth of one per cent.
- ☼ 14 billion pounds of trash is dumped into the ocean every year.
- ☼ It takes 90% less energy to recycle aluminum cans than to make new ones.
- ☼ 5 billion aluminum cans are used each year.
- ☼ 84 percent of all household waste can be recycled.
- ☼ For every 2000 pounds of paper (1 ton) recycled, we save 7,000 gallons of water free from chemicals.
- ☼ Approximately only 10 percent of every landfill can be cleaned up.

adapted from EarthZone

What steps can you take to be a wiser and more just user and consumer?

A Child's Mite—57 Cents

A true story worth sharing with the young and old.

A sobbing little girl stood near a small church from which she had been turned away because it "was too crowded." "I can't go to Sunday School," she sobbed to the pastor as he walked by.

Seeing her shabby, unkempt appearance, the pastor guessed the reason and, taking her by the hand, took her inside and found a place for her in the Sunday school class. The child was so happy that they found room for her, that she went to bed that night thinking of the children who have no place to worship Jesus.

Some two years later, this child lay dead in one of the poor tenement buildings and the parents called for the kindhearted pastor, who had befriended their daughter, to handle the final arrangements.

As her poor little body was being moved, a worn and crumpled purse was found which seemed to have been rummaged from some trash dump. Inside was found 57 cents and a note scribbled in childish handwriting which read, "This is to help build the little church bigger so more children can go to Sunday School." For two years she had saved for this offering of love.

When the pastor tearfully read the note, he knew instantly what he would do. Carrying this note and the cracked, red pocketbook to the pulpit, he told the story of her unselfish love and devotion. He challenged his deacons to get busy

and raise enough money for the larger building. But the story does not end there!

Guidelines for Giving—Sharing our Treasure

GIVE FIRST. Make the first use of your income, time or talent an act of faithfulness to God.

GIVE GRATEFULLY. Bring to mind God's gifts and ways this time, talent and money can matter for eternity. Remind yourself of the joy in giving back in gratitude.

GIVE FAITHFULLY. Cultivate the discipline of faithfulness regardless of how you feel at the time.

GIVE PROPORTIONALLY. Compare your gifts to no one else's and happily give from your resources.

GIVE GENEROUSLY. Scripture says that the way we give and live is measured back to us. Give as you would like to receive.

GIVE SACRIFICIALLY. You know and God knows when a gift comes from your heart. Practice giving in a way that expresses your love for God.

GIVE CHEERFULLY. God delights in and loves a cheerful giver.

GIVE FREELY. Attach no strings or expectations; seek nothing—particularly public recognition—in

A newspaper learned of the story and published it. It was read by a realtor who offered them a parcel of land worth many thousands. When told that the church could not pay so much, he offered it for 57 cents.

Church members made large donations. Checks came from far and wide. Within five years the little girl's gift had increased to \$250,000—a huge sum, particularly for the turn of the century. Her unselfish love had paid a large dividend.

When you are in the city of Philadelphia, look up Temple Baptist Church, with a seating capacity of 3,300 and Temple University, where hundreds of students are trained.

Have a look, too, at the Good Samaritan Hospital and at a Sunday school building which houses hundreds of Sunday Schoolers, so that no child in the area will ever need to be left outside during Sunday school time.

The picture of the sweet face of the little girl whose 57 cents, so sacrificially saved and who made such remarkable history, may be seen in one of the rooms of this building. Alongside of it is a portrait of her kind pastor, Dr. Russel H. Conwell, author of the book, "Acres of Diamonds."

A true story, which goes to show what God can do with 57 cents.



There IS much joy in heart-felt, sacrificial giving.

“Amen I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood.”

Mark 12: 43-44

return.

GIVE PERSONALLY. Invest yourself, your time, talent and treasure. Involve yourself in the privilege of returning to God with the first of all you have. Allow each member of your family the same opportunity for personal involvement.

GIVE QUIETLY. Give without fanfare, but be prepared to explain why you give.

GIVE EXPECTANTLY. Look for ways to share your gifts, bear another's burden, or contribute your resources to God.

GIVE WORSHIPFULLY. Our model is the author of giving. "For this is how God loved the world; He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have eternal life." John 3:16

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The parish stewardship office of the Archdiocese of Chicago's Stewardship and Development Department exists to support and educate our priests and people to enable them to realize the joy that is theirs by boldly reclaiming their role as baptized disciples of Jesus Christ, recognizing and embracing God as the Source of all, and gratefully responding to God's abundance by sharing our gifts.



The true meaning of life is to plant trees under which you do not expect to sit.

Nelson Henderson

*We're On The Web at
[http://www.archchicago.org/departments/
stewardship_dev/stewardship.shtm](http://www.archchicago.org/departments/stewardship_dev/stewardship.shtm)*

Praying Easter Through Pentecost

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER- John 20:19-31

Some individuals cannot accept second-hand knowledge. Without some kind of personal experience, they continue to doubt. Thomas seems to be such a personality type. Words of his fellow disciples were not sufficient to remove his doubt. He had to touch and see for himself. It would be interesting to read "A Gospel according to Thomas" to see how he would approach people like himself who found words and testimony of others insufficient.

What role does scripture play in your life as a revelation of God?
What wonders of God have you seen during Easter week?

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER- JOHN 21: 1-19 (C)

Jesus had many meals with his disciples and friends. When invited by strangers and "sinners" Jesus said yes and sat at their tables. In the sharing of food and drink, in the sharing of words and ideas, lives came together and destinies were shaped. The risen Lord continued to encounter his friends in the breaking of the bread, in the cooking of fish, in early morning breakfasts. The Lord has left us the Eucharist so that we might continue to hear his voice and taste his love. Hopefully the gift of the Eucharistic meal will lead us to share our food and lives with others.

Whom do you invite over for supper?

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER- John 10:27-30 (C)

The mystery of Jesus is partially disclosed through various concepts and images. Jesus is both human and divine; he is the victim-lamb and the good shepherd. These different expressions give us various angles of seeing the rich life of our Lord. It takes great faith to believe that the Lord is also the lamb, that the savior of the world is nailed to the tree of the cross. Again this Sunday we ponder the mystery of the risen Lord and become increasingly aware that we are called to conform our lives to his. It is well that we ask the question "who made us?" and the further question "what is this Lord of ours like?"

What questions do you ask of God and life itself?
Is the image of Christ as "lamb" meaningful to you?

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER- John 13:31-33, 34-35 (C)

Fear and love don't mix well, like oil and water. But then it all depends on what type of fear we are talking about, what type of love. Perfect love does cast out all foolish fear. Yet our hearts are often troubled by the anxieties of life, frightened of the glory of God, worried that we, weak and barren branches, might be severed from the vine. So we must choose and hopefully we will turn to the risen Lord as the way, the truth, and the life. Any other choice throws us into the darkness of destructive fear.

What are your three major fears?

Listen attentively to the Lord speaking to you this Sunday: "Peace be with you! Have no fear for I am near!"

How does love cast out fear in your life?

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER- John 14: 23-29 (C)

Sunday is the day that we Christians celebrate again and again the great mystery of the resurrection. Jesus, the son of God, continues to shine upon us with warmth and graciousness of God's love. Sunday after Sunday we expose ourselves to the message of love and are invited to deepen our participation in the paschal mystery. Even nature enters into the cycle of dying and rising and becomes a constant reminder of the fidelity of the sun and the Son.

Have you had any little or large resurrections this Easter season?

What season are you now living in: spring? summer? autumn? winter?

Adapted from From Resurrection to Pentecost by Bishop Robert F. Morneau, Auxiliary Bishop of Green Bay, WI. If you would like a copy of daily reflections, email atirpak@archchicago.org.